



CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE PRESIDENCY

AFGHANISTAN STUDY GROUP REPORT



**REVITALIZING OUR EFFORTS
RETHINKING OUR STRATEGIES**

Co-Chairs:

General James L. Jones, USMC (Ret.)

Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering

Release Date: January 30, 2008

Second Edition

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The Center for the Study of the Presidency, founded in 1965, is a non-profit, non-partisan 501(c)(3) organization. The Center's mission is to promote leadership in the Presidency and the Congress to generate innovative solutions to current national challenges; preserve the historic memory of the Presidency by identifying lessons from the successes and failures of such leadership; draw on a wide range of talent to offer ways to better organize an increasingly compartmentalized Federal Government; and educate and inspire the next generation of America's leaders to incorporate civility, inclusiveness, and character into their public and private lives and discourse.

Other CSP publications include:

A Call to Greatness: Challenging Our Next President (Rowman and Littlefield, 2008).

Presidential Studies Quarterly (ISSN 0360-4918).

Papers of the 2005-2006 Center Fellows (Washington, D.C., 2006).

Facing the Character Crisis in America (Washington, D.C., 2006).

Declaration on Civility and Inclusive Leadership. 2nd Ed. (Washington, D.C., 2006).

The Grace and Power of Civility (Washington, D.C., 2004).

Maximizing NATO for the War on Terror (Washington, D.C., 2005).

An Initiative: Strengthening U.S.-Muslim Communications (Washington, D.C., 2003).

Lessons for the 21st Century: Vulnerability and Surprise, December 7, 1941 and September 11, 2001 (Washington, D.C., 2002).

Marshalling Science, Bridging the Gap: How to Win the War Against Terrorism and Build a Better Peace (Washington, D.C., 2002).

Triumphs and Tragedies of the Modern Presidency: Seventy-Six Case Studies in Presidential Leadership, Praeger Publishers (Westport, Connecticut, 2001).

Comprehensive Strategic Reform: Panel Report to the President and Congress (Washington, D.C., 2001)

In Harm's Way: Intervention and Prevention (Washington, D.C., 2000).

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* The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the institutional affiliations of any or all of the members of the Study Group. Participants endorsed the general policy thrust and judgments in the report, though not necessarily every finding.

LETTER FROM CO-CHAIRS

Afghanistan stands today at a crossroads. The progress achieved after six years of international engagement is under serious threat from resurgent violence, weakening international resolve, mounting regional challenges and a growing lack of confidence on the part of the Afghan people about the future direction of their country. The United States and the international community have tried to win the struggle in Afghanistan with too few military forces and insufficient economic aid, and without a clear and consistent comprehensive strategy to fill the power vacuum outside Kabul and to counter the combined challenges of reconstituted Taliban and al-Qaeda forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan, a runaway opium economy, and the stark poverty faced by most Afghans.

We believe that success in Afghanistan remains a critical national security imperative for the United States and the international community. Achieving that success will require a sustained, multi-year commitment from the U.S. and a willingness to make the war in Afghanistan – and the rebuilding of that country – a higher U.S. foreign policy priority. Although the obstacles there remain substantial, the strategic consequences of failure in Afghanistan would be severe for long-term U.S. interests in the region and for security at home. Allowing the Taliban to re-establish its influence in Afghanistan, as well as failure to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a failed state, would not only undermine the development of the country, it would constitute a major victory for al-Qaeda and its global efforts to spread violence and extremism.

The “light footprint” in Afghanistan needs to be replaced with the “right footprint” by the U.S. and its allies. It is time to re-vitalize and re-double our efforts toward stabilizing Afghanistan and re-think our economic and military strategies to ensure that the level of our commitment is commensurate with the threat posed by possible failure in Afghanistan. Without the right level of commitment on the part of the U.S., its allies, and Afghanistan’s neighbors, the principles agreed upon by both the Afghan government and the international community at the 2006 London Conference and the goals stated in the Afghanistan Compact will not be achievable. Additionally, recent events in Pakistan further emphasize that there can be no successful outcome for Afghanistan if its neighbors, especially Pakistan, are not part of the solution.

The efforts of the Afghanistan Study Group to help re-think U.S. strategy comes at a time when polls indicate a weakening of resolve in the international community to see the effort in Afghanistan through to a successful conclusion. The Pew Global Attitudes Survey of June 2007 reported that the publics of NATO countries with significant numbers of troops in Afghanistan are divided over whether U.S. and NATO forces should be brought home immediately, or should remain until the country is stabilized. In all but two countries, the U.S. and the United Kingdom, majorities said troops should be withdrawn as soon as possible.

Moreover, recent polls in Afghanistan reflect a downward turn in attitudes toward the ability of the Afghan government and the international community to improve those conditions the Afghan people identify as the most critical problems facing the country: insecurity, weak governance, widespread corruption, a poor economy and unemployment.

What should the United States and the international community do to address the many obstacles to success in Afghanistan? Many efforts to assess what needs to be done at this point have included an analysis of the mistakes that have been made – and the opportunities lost – since the Taliban were removed from power in late 2001. While we acknowledge that mistakes have been made, the Study

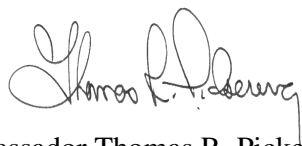
Group focuses its attention on the future – analyzing the current situation with a view to what is needed to match our strategies with our goals and the required resources.

After offering its assessment of the current situation in Afghanistan, the Study Group addresses six critical issues to revitalize the U.S. and international effort in Afghanistan – international coordination, security, governance and the rule of law, counter-narcotics, economic development and reconstruction, and Afghanistan and its neighbors. Policy recommendations of the Study Group on each of these issues are found in italics.

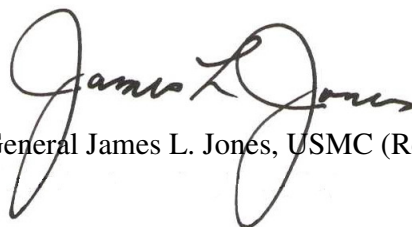
In addition to the recommendations on these six issues, the Study Group offers three overarching recommendations to bring sharper focus and attention to Afghanistan – within the U.S. government and within the broader international community. The first is a proposal for the Administration and the Congress to decouple Iraq and Afghanistan in the legislative process and in the management of these conflicts in the Executive branch. The second is to establish a Special Envoy for Afghanistan position within the U.S. government, charged with coordinating all aspects of U.S. policies towards Afghanistan. The third is to propose an international mandate to formulate a new unified strategy to stabilize Afghanistan over the next five years and to build international support for it.

At the most recent NATO Defense Ministerials, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said: “We need to lift our sights and see what is required for long-term success.” In this regard we strongly commend the efforts now underway within the U.S. government and other national governments; NATO, the EU and the UN; non-governmental organizations; and, most importantly, Afghanistan itself to address the many shortcomings in current strategies and policies.

It is in this spirit – and with the hope of elevating the dialogue of the critical importance of succeeding in Afghanistan – that the Afghanistan Study Group offers this report and its recommendations.



Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering



General James L. Jones, USMC (Ret.)

BACKGROUND

“It is critical for the United States to provide additional political, economic and military support for Afghanistan, including resources that might become available as combat forces are moved from Iraq.”

- Iraq Study Group Report, Recommendation 18

The Center for the Study of the Presidency (CSP) was closely engaged in the work of the Iraq Study Group. During the discussions of that group it became more and more evident that Afghanistan was at great risk of becoming “the forgotten war.” Participants and witnesses pointed to the danger of losing the war in Afghanistan unless a reassessment took place of the effort being undertaken in that country by the United States, NATO and the international community.

In the spring of 2007, recognizing the importance of making policy makers in Washington aware of the deepening crisis in Afghanistan, Center President Ambassador David M. Abshire decided to establish a smaller-scale study group. The Afghanistan Study Group’s work has been conducted on a voluntary pro-bono basis under the auspices of the Center for the Study of the Presidency. With the Iraq Study Group experience in mind, this group attempted to work on a flexible and agile basis to ensure that its work bears results as soon as possible. For more focused work, the group also decided to center its analysis on several key issues that its members identified as both urgent and crucial for future success.

The group, co-chaired by Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering and General James L. Jones, included prominent experts on the region and on foreign policy (a list is available in the front of this report). In addition to its working sessions, the group held consultative sessions with: Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns and Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Richard Boucher; former United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary General to Afghanistan, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi; Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States, Mahmud Durrani; Ambassador of Afghanistan to the United States, Said Tayeb Jawad; and United States Ambassador to NATO Victoria Nuland (via video-teleconference).[†]

The goal of the Afghanistan Study Group is to provide policy makers with key recommendations that will lead to a re-vitalization and re-doubling of the United States and international community’s commitment and effort in Afghanistan. The study group’s findings and proposals will be shared with U.S. government officials, Members of Congress, key officials in NATO and at the United Nations, and representatives of the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as other interested governments and parties. We hope that, taken together, the work and commitment of all these parties in the months ahead will ensure that the current war in Afghanistan is not forgotten, but won for the safety and well-being of the people of Afghanistan, the region and the world community.

[†] The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of any or all of these individuals.

OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS

While most of our analysis and recommendations fall into specific subject areas – including security, governance, counter-narcotics, development, and regional considerations – some of the challenges and solutions facing our effort in Afghanistan cut across those issues. This section deals with crosscutting recommendations.

It is clear that one of the key challenges that the mission in Afghanistan now faces is the lack of a common strategic vision that will reinvigorate our efforts under unified attainable goals. This process has to be done comprehensively – involving both military and civilian aspects of the mission as equals – and in a cooperative fashion among the U.S., NATO, the UN, the EU, and the Afghan government. The Afghanistan Compact should be the basis for any common strategic vision, and discussion should focus on developing strategies to achieve that vision.

For that purpose, *the Study Group proposes to establish an Eminent Persons Group to develop a long-term, coherent international strategy for Afghanistan and a strategic communications plan to garner strong public support for that strategy.* The Eminent Persons Group would aim to have its report and recommendations available for the April 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest, Romania, and the opening of the UN General Assembly the following September. If an International Coordinator position were created under a UN mandate* (as is strongly recommended), this group should be established to serve as an advisory body to that individual. However, *if the efforts to appoint an individual to that position continue to lag, we recommend that NATO establish the Eminent Persons Group under its auspices*, while including representatives from other partnering organizations (such as the UN, World Bank and EU) and appropriate countries. A principal objective of the group should be to rally support for continued and enhanced efforts by NATO countries and other regional players in Afghanistan – in all spheres, military and civilian. The Eminent Persons Group would also aim to increase public awareness in partnering countries, especially in Europe, of the relevance of this conflict to their own security. To maximize this effort, the U.S. should support a European or other highly qualified international leader to chair this group, while remaining fully engaged as a key participant in the process.

Within the U.S., *the Study Group calls for decoupling Iraq and Afghanistan.* Since 2003, U.S. funding of military and other mission operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have been linked together in the Congressional and Executive branch budget processes for authorizations, appropriations and supplemental requests. The rationale for this was that it would provide a more unified focus on overall “Global War on Terrorism” efforts by the Congress, the Administration and the military.

In July 2007, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) issued a report on the costs of Iraq, Afghanistan, and other war on terror operations since 9/11. The report emphasized the issue of transparency in war and related costs, noting the Iraq Study Group’s observation that the funding/budget requests from the Executive branch are presented in a confusing manner, making it difficult for both the general public and members of Congress to understand the request or to differentiate it from counter-terrorism operations around the world or operations in Afghanistan.

* The ASG regrets the news that the lead candidate for this position, Lord Paddy Ashdown, has withdrawn his candidacy due to opposition from the Afghan government and hopes that the international community and the Afghan government will be able to achieve agreement on this issue in a timely manner.

While arguments have been made that in effect the two missions are practically decoupled, we believe this to be insufficient.

There is, accordingly, an emerging view that Afghanistan and its long-term problems would be better addressed by decoupling funding and related programs from those for Iraq. Doing so would enable more coherence and focus on the increasingly important Afghanistan (and related Pakistan) issues, both for the Congress and the Executive branch as well as in dealing with other governments and international organizations to achieve needed improvement in coordination, collaboration, and efficacy of efforts in the interrelated military, economic and reconstruction spheres.

Decoupling these two conflicts likely will improve the overall U.S. approach to fighting global terrorism. While the fates of these two countries are connected – and a failure in Iraq would influence Afghanistan and vice versa – tying together Afghanistan and Iraq also creates the false impression that they consist of the same mission, while in reality the challenges in these countries differ significantly from one another. It is not the intention of this recommendation to speak to the comparative funding levels for the two conflicts – only that the Afghanistan Study Group believes it would be best to consider each on their own merits.

Finally, a more unified management structure within the U.S. government would create a more unified approach toward the international community and Afghanistan. Therefore, in addition to decoupling the funding mechanisms, *we recommend that a Special Envoy to Afghanistan position be established within the U.S. government, charged with coordinating and orchestrating all aspects of U.S. policies towards Afghanistan.* This should include (but not be limited to) the strategic guidance of military operations, all civilian operations, and links to the UN, NATO and Europe. This official should have overall responsibility for the direction of U.S. assistance programs to Afghanistan and coordinating these programs and policies with European and Asian counterparts and Afghan government officials. While potentially challenging and possibly contentious within the U.S. bureaucracy, higher level of coordination in Washington is necessary to increase our chances of success in Afghanistan.

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUE RECOMMENDATIONS

International Coordination

- While the current command structure may be very difficult to change in light of existing differences among the Allies on mission participation in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) missions, it is essential that NATO authorities regularly review the command and control arrangement with the aim to simplify and streamline it at the earliest moment.
- While it is not advisable to immediately attempt an overhaul of the command structure, NATO and the U.S. should strive to achieve greater unity of command whenever possible. As a first step toward this objective, the U.S.-led training mission for the Afghan National Army (ANA), which occupies the bulk of American forces in Afghanistan still under national command, could be shifted to NATO once sufficient NATO resources have been committed for this purpose. G8 considerations would have to be addressed should this be deemed as worthwhile mission realignment.
- Appoint a high-level international coordinator under a UN mandate to: advise all parties to the mission in Afghanistan on needed changes to their policies, funding and actions; ensure that all international assistance programs have a coordinated strategy that aims to bolster the central government's authority throughout the country and is closely coordinated with the Afghan government; advise on the implications to and needs for security coordination; and conduct dialogue with Afghanistan's neighbors. Assign to this individual a joint professional staff representing a wide range of partnering countries and organizations in Afghanistan.
- Develop, with all countries involved, an agreed concept of operations, goals and objectives, organizational structure and set of metrics to evaluate Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). Ideally, the international coordinator, when appointed, should be tasked with overseeing this process.

Security

- Work to increase the number of NATO troops and military equipment in Afghanistan to the levels requested by the commanders. Ensure that the increase in quantity of forces is matched with the quality of the forces that is needed for the mission they need to perform. We endorse the recommendation of the Iraq Study Group that "It is critical for the United States to provide additional...military support for Afghanistan, including resources that might become available as combat forces are moved from Iraq."
- Focus more efforts and resources on training and standing up the ANA and recruiting, training, and providing adequate pay and equipment to the Afghan National Police (ANP) to maintain security in an area once coalition forces depart. The U.S. and its NATO partners should reconsider, together with the Afghan government, benchmarks for force levels of both the ANA and ANP that are realistic, attainable, and maintainable.
- The U.S. needs to play a greater role in building and expanding the ANP, while continuing to engage other international allies in this mission. This would also require a G8 mission realignment as this task is presently under Germany's leadership. Assistance needs to go beyond equipping and training, and should be directed towards embedding foreign police officers into Afghan units – possibly by creating a mechanism similar to the NATO-led Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLT) mechanism for the ANA. The international community

also needs to focus on holding Afghan police officers and their superiors accountable for their performance.

- While “zero civilian casualties” may not be an attainable goal given the nature of the enemy and the battlefield, the U.S. and NATO should, as a matter of policy, continue to publicly reinforce their goal of minimizing civilian casualties, as well as being judicious in the frequent use of air power, erring on the side of caution when civilian casualties are probable.
- Better involve Afghan forces in U.S. and NATO military planning and operations. Enhance coordination with the Afghan Ministry of Defense and the Afghan National Army.
- Set up a special NATO compensation fund for civilian deaths, injuries or property damage resulting from its military operations in Afghanistan, to which all NATO member states should contribute.
- Develop, with the international community, a coordinated strategy in support of President Karzai’s national political reconciliation efforts. Consider providing incentives to Taliban that do not subscribe to extremist ideologies and agree to put down their weapons and join the political process. The international coalition partners need to adhere to the same standards as the Afghan government when negotiating with insurgents.
- Develop a regional plan to effectively target the risks coming out of the border region area with Pakistan – this plan should involve the governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan and other regional powers and include better combined intelligence, operations and non-military efforts. Specifically, with regard to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), rather than trying to insert U.S. influence directly into the region, Washington should encourage systemic political and economic reform that incorporates the FATA into the administrative, legal and political systems of Pakistan.

Governance and Rule of Law

- A coherent and resourced strategy to increase the reach, capacity, and legitimacy of the Afghan government must be a top priority.
- The Afghan government and the international community must refocus their efforts to resurrect an integrated and effective justice system for Afghanistan, through increased and sustained funding to the sector and through working towards an Afghan-led prioritization process that will set a realistic agenda for progress in the justice sector.
- Work to establish “pockets of competence” throughout the country by focusing on development of human resources in the sector and institutional development of the Supreme Court, the Office of the Attorney General, the Ministry of Justice, and the Afghan National Police (currently within the Ministry of Interior) at the national and provincial levels.
- Provide resources and political support to the newly created Advisory Panel on Presidential Appointments.

Counter-Narcotics

- Sequence the core tools of counter-narcotics policy – crop eradication, interdiction (including arresting and prosecuting traffickers, destruction of labs, etc.), and development (alternative livelihoods).
- Increase investment in development – especially infrastructure and industry development – in all provinces, but ensure that these programs go first of all to provinces that are not planting poppy or that are reducing production.

- Enhance interdiction efforts. Ensure the removal of high officials benefiting from the drug trade from the government but also from contracts operating on behalf of the coalition.
- Integrate counter-narcotics and counter-insurgency by using international military forces to assist the ANP in interdiction, including supporting the ANP in its efforts to destroy heroin labs.
- How best to pursue poppy eradication and the relation of eradication to counter-insurgency presents the greatest challenge – and controversy – for the U.S., the international community, and the Afghan government. Proposals to enhance eradication immediately (including the use of herbicides whether sprayed from the air or the ground), especially in Helmand province, could prove extremely dangerous for Afghanistan, further undermining support for the government of President Hamid Karzai, alienating thousands of Afghan farmers and providing new recruits for the Taliban.
- In lieu of massive eradication, adopt an “Afghan-centric” approach that will include: public information campaign stating that the purpose of counter-narcotics is not to destroy but to enhance the livelihoods of the people of Afghanistan; a request for voluntary restraint in planting while actually delivering (not just announcing or funding or launching) much larger alternative livelihood programs; the provision of all the services currently provided to farmers by drug traffickers: futures contracts, guaranteed marketing, financing, and technical assistance (extension services); and increased availability of micro-finance.

Economic Development and Reconstruction

- The donor community should focus on giving the Afghan government credit for projects and programs. To do so, donors need to focus on improving Afghan government accounting and enhance anti-corruption reforms.
- Encourage the Afghan government to appoint an Afghan development “czar”, drawing authority from President Karzai and able to coordinate the various government ministries, to work with the international community to ensure concerted development efforts.
- Spread development assistance more evenly around the country. The donor community should ensure that relatively peaceful areas benefit from assistance.
- Reconstruction aid and development assistance must flow into a region immediately after it is cleared of Taliban presence by the coalition. Representatives of the local governments must be directly involved in administering the aid to build support and trust between the Afghan people and the local authorities.
- Enhance and accelerate infrastructure development – especially outlays on roads, power and water systems – that are necessary to improve security, governance and the Afghan economy. These efforts should utilize the Afghan labor force, as well as Afghan contractors, as much as possible.

Afghanistan and its Neighbors

- Embark on a sustained, long-term diplomatic effort to reduce antagonisms between Pakistan and Afghanistan. As part of that, the international community should: encourage Kabul to accept the Durand Line as the international border; work with Pakistan to make every effort to root out Taliban ideology from its own society and close down the extremist madrassahs (religious schools) and training camps that perpetuate the Taliban insurgency and cross-border activities; and encourage Pakistan to remove burdensome restrictions that inhibit the transportation of goods through Pakistan to and from Afghanistan, including from India.

- Pakistan has to develop fully effective means for asserting its authority and physical control over the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), including reforming archaic administrative arrangements and fully integrating these areas politically and economically within Pakistan.
- Develop a strategy towards Iran that includes the possibility to resume discussions with Iran to coax greater cooperation from Tehran in helping to stabilize Afghanistan. Establish, with U.S. allies, a cooperative net assessment of what Iran is doing in Afghanistan to map out a sound strategy that seeks to convince Tehran to develop a more constructive role there and includes the possibility to reestablish direct talks on Afghanistan.
- Initiate a regional process to engage Afghanistan's neighbors and potential regional partners in future sustainable development of Afghanistan. This process can begin with relatively minor confidence building measures and the establishment of a regional forum for discussion of common challenges. Over the longer term, as Afghanistan makes progress towards standing on its own feet, these can serve as a basis for a multilateral regional accord that would: recognize Afghanistan as a permanently neutral state; provide international recognition for Afghanistan's borders; pledge non-interference in internal Afghan affairs; ban the clandestine supply of arms to nongovernmental actors; and establish a comprehensive regime to promote the flow of trade through Afghanistan.

AFGHANISTAN STUDY GROUP (ASG) – ASSESSMENT

The mission to stabilize Afghanistan is faltering. Following the rapid successes in toppling the Taliban government, passing a new constitution, and electing a president and parliament, the long road to reconstruction, reconciliation, and institutional development has grown hazardous. Despite a significant increase in the number of foreign troops and the amount of aid to Afghanistan since 2002, violence, insecurity, and opium production have risen dramatically as Afghan confidence in their government and its international partners falls. The year 2007 has been the deadliest for American and international troops in Afghanistan since U.S.-led coalition forces invaded Afghanistan in 2001. As we struggle to build an Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police, suicide attacks against Afghan security forces have also surged.

The most immediate threat to Afghanistan comes from an anti-government insurgency that has grown considerably over the past two years. It has become apparent that the Taliban cannot fight the U.S. and coalition forces head-to-head, and coalition forces have had success in targeting Taliban leadership over the last year, capturing or killing several senior commanders. Therefore, the Taliban rely on terrorism and ambushes, launching over 140 suicide bombings in 2007, with numerous attacks in the heart of the capital, Kabul. Over 80 Afghan civilians reportedly lost their lives in suicide attacks in September 2007 alone. The Taliban have been able to infiltrate many areas throughout the country, especially the south and the southeast where the government is weakest, intimidating and coercing the local populations and occasionally holding territory. As a result, the prospect of again losing significant parts of Afghanistan to the forces of Islamic extremists has moved from the improbable to the possible.

Although international support for the mission in Afghanistan remains broad, some nations believe the mission is failing. Several NATO countries are wavering in their troop commitments. Britain, Denmark, and Poland have dispatched greater numbers of troops this year, and Canada, Australia and the Netherlands continue to participate in the heaviest fighting in the south. At the same time, strong public opposition to the Afghan war has grown in Canada, the Netherlands, and Germany, among others, threatening to fray the coalition in the next two years. Burden-sharing among NATO allies is critical to the mission in terms of both available resources and public perceptions – an increasingly unilateral mission will be politically vulnerable in Afghanistan, the U.S., and NATO. A failure of the NATO mission in Afghanistan would also damage the future prospects of the organization itself.

A concerted effort to regain strategic focus and momentum in Afghanistan is needed to reverse the backsliding of the last two years and to secure our considerable investment thus far. Right now many Afghans are uncertain about the direction of their country and are losing confidence in the ability of their army and NATO forces to protect them from the Taliban. They are also increasingly frustrated with the failure of President Karzai's government to extend its authority and services throughout the country and by the lack of improvement in their daily lives six years after the international reconstruction process was launched. The Taliban have been able to exploit the Karzai government's shortcomings to their advantage.

Failure to defeat the Taliban's force and ideology in Afghanistan would also signal a strategic defeat against global extremism and contribute to the strengthening of international terrorist movements throughout the region and globally. Not only would failure to stabilize Afghanistan pave the way for a new al-Qaeda safe haven in that country, it would also increase instability in Pakistan, where local Taliban and other extremist groups have stepped up their own efforts to challenge the authority of the

Pakistani regime. As noted in the National Intelligence Estimate released in July 2007 entitled “The Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland,” the Taliban and al-Qaeda have established safe havens within Pakistan from which they plan, organize and train for attacks in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and globally.

Realizing the vision of a new Afghanistan that is stable, secure and free of influence from radical Islamic leaders is a core objective of the U.S. fight against Islamic extremism and militancy. The Taliban’s links with al-Qaeda remain close: one of al-Qaeda’s top priorities is helping the Taliban fight against coalition forces in Afghanistan. Taliban support for al-Qaeda is critical to its survival – and almost certainly that of its leaders Osama bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri – in the tribal areas of Pakistan along the Afghanistan border.

The U.S. and international coalition forces are at a critical moment. Afghanistan strategy and policy are currently under review in several national capitals and at NATO headquarters. The Study Group believes two possible courses of action would have dire consequences – either withdrawing forces from Afghanistan or adopting a minimal approach.

If international forces are pulled from Afghanistan, the fragile Afghan government would likely fall apart, again becoming a failed state while the Taliban and other warlords would gain control of various areas and eventually fight each other. Development efforts and accomplishments heretofore would be rolled back as they cannot be maintained in insecure areas. Not only would failure to stabilize Afghanistan pave the way for a revival of an al-Qaeda safe haven in that country, it would also likely have a blowback effect in Pakistan, where local Taliban and other extremist groups would be inspired to step up their own efforts to destabilize the Pakistani regime, with the hope of one day installing fundamentalist, theocratic rule.

A minimum approach also risks squandering recent advances. Although the Taliban would not return to power, the Afghan government would be focused on that conflict at the expense of improving security elsewhere in the country, building its institutional capacity or providing public services. Economic growth would likely slow. Afghanistan would remain dependent on international assistance. The country would be unlikely to develop competent government institutions, tackle the expanding drug trade, or create a sustainable democracy. In addition, limiting the purpose of the mission may accelerate trends in many NATO countries to further decrease their level of commitment. In short, minimal efforts mean minimal progress and long-term slow deterioration of the Afghan mission.

The ASG therefore believes the only reasonable strategy at this point is to reinvigorate and redouble the international community’s effort and return to the Afghanistan Compact vision. U.S. and other key countries must concentrate and coordinate their efforts to beat back the insurgency, propel economic development, and build a competent and capable Afghan government. Such moves would go a long way to reassure the Afghan people of the international community’s long-term commitment to the stabilization and rebuilding of their country.

KEY ISSUE: INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION

There is an acute need for greater international coordination on both the military and civil sides of Afghanistan's stabilization and reconstruction efforts, with the latter including over 40 contributing nations, the UN, the World Bank, the European Union, and a multitude of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The momentum that many would have hoped to see in the wake of the February 2006 London Conference on Afghanistan, attended by over 50 nations, has not materialized. The lack of strong leadership over the international reconstruction effort has led to fragmentation and lack of coherence in the implementation of various aid programs.

Much has been said concerning the existing military chain of command. Integrating the missions of NATO and the U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) was a difficult and long process. At the end of the effort in 2006, 26 nations agreed to the U.S.-NATO military proposals through NATO's Military Committee and the North Atlantic Council. The new command and control system was almost immediately put to the test as NATO expanded its operations to the south and east of Afghanistan in late summer of 2006. Operation Medusa, in the south, was a near-conventional military operation initiated by Taliban insurgents who, quite mistakenly, believed that the newly-arrived NATO forces would not fight. They were wrong, and they suffered a major tactical defeat, the effects of which significantly restricted their capabilities to mount a Spring Offensive in 2007. Had there been major flaws in the integrated command and control system, they would have been clearly manifest during that lengthy period of fierce fighting.

This is not to say that the current command and control system cannot be adjusted or improved. By definition, international military operations are complex, beset by national caveats and other restrictions, and do not compare with the efficiencies resident in a national chain of command. To be successful, senior commanders must be patient, tolerant, and understanding of the complexities (both military and political) that bring about success in international operations.

Essentially, there are two strategic commands operating in Afghanistan. Both are commanded by Americans. One (SHAPE) is in Mons, Belgium, and the other is on MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida. Both commands are comprised of multinational forces, and both must work in harmony in order to succeed in Afghanistan. American commanders and key staff officers are interspersed at virtually all critical positions of the NATO command structure in order to de-conflict operations. In fact, for the past year, the U.S. has also commanded the tactical headquarters of NATO's force in Afghanistan (ISAF) with a third four-star general.

The range of military missions in Afghanistan encompasses everything from humanitarian to highly kinetic conventional and special operations. It is a fact that some nations have strong national restrictions with regard to the type of operations their forces are authorized to undertake, but this has been true since 2004. As long as nations refuse to modify their positions with regard to caveats and restrictions, the command structure will be, by necessity, complex. It would be ideal if nations could agree, as they did in Kosovo in 2004, to remove virtually all caveats and restrictions. This far, in Afghanistan, they have not done so.

NATO and OEF forces have some degree of overlapping missions. NATO's ISAF's key military tasks include assisting the Afghan government in extending its authority across the country, conducting stability and security operations in co-ordination with the Afghan national security forces; mentoring and supporting the Afghan National Army (ANA); and supporting Afghan government programs to disarm illegally armed groups. The OEF mission in Afghanistan is to

conduct counter-insurgency (COIN) operations against the Taliban and other insurgents, and to stop the infiltration of Taliban forces from Pakistan into Afghanistan.

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The existing command structure is the result of some Allies not wanting their forces to participate in OEF's COIN missions, which are politically sensitive on their home public opinion fronts. Such an “imperfect and complicated” command structure requires ISAF and OEF commanders and their subordinates and staffs to coordinate and ensure transparency in their operational plans.

While the current command structure may be very difficult to change in light of current prohibitions by some allies on participation in OEF missions, *it is important that NATO military authorities regularly review command and control arrangements with the aim to simplify and streamline existing command structures wherever and whenever possible.* Changing political conditions, in the U.S. or in NATO, or the evolution of mission objectives on the ground in Afghanistan, are two examples of opportunities where one might obtain consensus for changes in command and control.

NATO and the U.S. should aim to consolidate missions whenever possible. *As a first step toward this objective, the U.S.-led training mission for the ANA, which occupies the bulk of American forces in Afghanistan still under national command, could become a NATO mission once enough NATO resources have been committed for this purpose.*

Structures for coordination of effort on the civil side are even less coherent. Neither the U.S., the United Nations nor NATO is responsible for setting, articulating or representing donor nation policies. The lead nation approach adopted in early 2002 (focused on security sector reform, not the aid effort as a whole) reflected a disinclination on the part of the American, UN and G8 leadership to step into this breach. This approach has consistently failed to yield either adequate resources or effective multinational collaboration. For several years no lead nation devoted enough attention or money to the sector under its purview with exception of Japan, for its Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) mission, and the U.S., for its training mission of the ANA. Police training has been inadequate, as have counter-narcotics, judicial and penal reforms. Further, no “lead nation” has assumed responsibility for economic development. Nominally, it was intended that the Afghan government set overall priorities. Had it been capable of effectively coordinating donor reconstruction assistance the international effort would have been in a much better position than it is today.

The recent expansion in the number of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) has exacerbated coordination problems among and within donor governments. These civil/military hybrid organizations vary greatly in structure, function and effectiveness. To the extent that they respond to military direction, NATO commanders may be able to effect some coordination, but there is no one providing such direction regarding their civil functions. [See further comments on PRT coordination below.]

There are several possibilities for enhancing international coordination among the civil components of Afghan reconstruction. One possibility, and the one that is being considered by the U.S. and its international partners, is to expand the United Nations responsibilities, and ask the UN Secretary General to appoint a high level representative for this purpose. *This individual would have to have the stature and authority necessary to command the respect of donor governments, including the U.S.* In addition to coordinating and working with the Afghan government, *he would also need to be in a position to deal with neighboring governments*, whose cooperation or lack thereof will make or break any international effort to stabilize Afghanistan.

An international coordinator will have to be tasked with the responsibility to advise all parties to the mission in Afghanistan on needed changes to their policies, funding and actions, as well as to ensure that all international assistance programs have a coordinated strategy that aims to bolster the central government's authority throughout the country and is coordinated with the Afghan government. He or she will need to be able to coordinate the economic and development efforts effectively, and advise on the implications to and needs for security coordination. While it cannot be expected that countries will completely give up control on how their resources are spent, there needs to be a mechanism that provides some power to the coordinator or he will not be able to adequately perform the task at hand. *We also recommend that the international coordinator be assigned a joint professional staff representing a wide range of the major partnering countries and organizations in Afghanistan.* This will allow the coordinator to be in sync with efforts conducted by the members and will enhance his ability to create harmonized efforts across regular channels of operation.

In addition to better coordination of military operations and civil efforts at reconstruction, there needs to be more concerted attention to relations with neighboring states, in particular Pakistan and Iran. For different reasons, the U.S. is talking to Islamabad but not Teheran. The Afghan government is talking to both. However, there appears to be no coordinated strategy, either in NATO or the UN, on how to handle these relationships that are so vital to Afghanistan's stability and its future. *One important role for the high level civilian coordinator mentioned above should be to conduct a dialogue with the governments of regional actors, especially Pakistan and Iran, focused on Afghanistan issues, on behalf of the international coalition aiding Afghanistan. There could also be ongoing efforts at NATO to encourage neighboring countries to cooperate in halting aid to the insurgency, especially in denying the use of their territory for the passage of narcotics and other illegal trafficking.*

The Study Group welcomes moves currently underway to strengthen the international coordination mechanism in Afghanistan, to achieve a more comprehensive approach that should help to ensure the international military and civil efforts reinforce one another and that the donors speak with one voice to Kabul. Success in the international community's overall counterterrorism and development goals in Afghanistan cannot be achieved unless the international and regional partners work together, through well-coordinated strategies and policies, to strengthen the authority and ability of the Afghanistan central government to provide security and needed social services to its people.

A specific challenge of international coordination that merits special attention is the mechanism of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs):

PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS

Provincial Reconstruction Teams are small, civilian-military units that assist provincial and local governments to govern more effectively and deliver essential services. The U.S. established the first PRTs in Afghanistan in 2002. There are now 25 PRTs in Afghanistan operating under the NATO-led

International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). PRTs are led by the U.S. and 12 other NATO and Coalition partners; another dozen countries contribute personnel, financial and material support.

There is no overarching concept of operations or organizational structure for PRTs in Afghanistan. In the relatively peaceful north and west, PRTs are operated by European countries and engage in peacekeeping. The German PRT in Kunduz has over 300 personnel and a large economic assistance unit located separately from a military force that operates under caveats that severely circumscribe its operations. In the conflicted south and east, U.S., British, Canadian and Dutch PRTs provide the civilian side of COIN operations. Typically, U.S. PRTs have 80 personnel: military leadership, two Army civil affairs teams, a platoon-size force protection unit and representatives from the Departments of State and Agriculture as well as USAID. While we recognize the benefit in carefully tailoring the PRTs to the specific regional and local needs, a degree of strategic coordination is needed.

In addition, within PRTs there is no unified chain of command. Civilian agency representatives report to their superiors in embassies or capitals. Personalities, local environment, domestic politics, capacity and funding of the lead nation all determine PRT priorities and programs. Moreover, there is no rationale for distributing resources among provinces on the basis of the size of the economy of the PRT lead nation. There is no coordination mechanism for aid going through PRTs. Finally, since there are no agreed goals and objectives for the PRT program, it is impossible to evaluate fairly its performance on the local level and on the programmatic level.

The purpose of PRTs in Afghanistan is to extend the authority of the central government into the provinces. PRTs concentrate in three areas: governance, reconstruction and security. Approaches vary widely. To improve governance, PRTs work with appointed provincial governors, police chiefs and elected provincial councils to increase capacity and improve the provision of services. In reconstruction, PRTs initially engage in quick impact, village improvement projects to “win hearts and minds.” Once established, PRTs work with Provincial Development Councils to develop projects and obtain funding. PRTs depend on a vast array of civilian and military funding programs and sources. Less than five percent of the U.S. assistance budget is channeled through U.S. PRTs. Beyond providing a security presence, PRTs do not conduct combat operations, protect civilians, or provide public order or law enforcement. PRTs do not engaged in counter narcotics operations.

PRTs should reflect the strategic overview of U.S. and NATO efforts in Afghanistan and play an assigned role, tailored to the local circumstances. *PRTs need an agreed concept of operations and basic common organizational structure as well as goals and objectives so they provide a standard range of services.* They also need to coordinate among themselves on a regular basis (and not settle for quarterly conferences) to exchange ideas on “best practices.” *There is need for a common source of quick disbursing funds for PRTs, so they can support short and long-term development projects. PRTs need to provide information about their accomplishments to Afghans and the international community. There is also need for a set of metrics to evaluate PRT operations.*

Ideally, the international coordinator, when appointed, should be tasked with overseeing the process of assessing, optimizing and synergizing the PRT mechanism. Alternatively, NATO should aim to create this process under its auspices.

KEY ISSUE: SECURITY

U.S. and NATO forces have had several battlefield successes in Afghanistan over the last year. The anticipated spring offensive by the Taliban never materialized. Coalition forces have also captured or killed several senior Taliban commanders and demonstrated that the Taliban is incapable of going head-to-head with coalition forces. Although the Taliban suffered heavy losses this past year, the U.S. military also lost more than 100 soldiers in 2007, the highest number of deaths in one year since the war began in 2001. Casualties among foreign troops climbed to more than 240 soldiers killed, their highest level since 2001. And Afghan civilian deaths reached an all-time high at about 1,000.

The battlefield strength of the coalition forces has forced the Taliban to rely increasingly on small-scale attacks by bands of insurgents and suicide bombings of soft targets that instill a sense of insecurity in the population. The Taliban is waging a traditional insurgency campaign. The Taliban's guerilla tactics have slowed work on reconstruction and humanitarian projects. The coalition has proved it can clear areas held by the Taliban, but often sees these areas fall back to Taliban influence as soon as the coalition forces depart. A November 25, 2007 *Washington Post* article about contrasting views within the U.S. government over progress in Afghanistan described the mixed security picture this way: "While the [U.S.] military finds success in a virtually unbroken line of tactical achievements, [U.S.] intelligence officials worry about a looming strategic failure."

There is a need for more U.S. and international troops in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is larger in size and population than Iraq but has far fewer national and foreign troops. NATO's ISAF currently has about 41,000 troops from 37 NATO (including the U.S.) and non-NATO countries. The U.S. has approximately 10,000 additional troops deployed under its own command. *The ASG endorses the recommendation of the Iraq Study Group that "It is critical for the United States to provide additional...military support for Afghanistan, including resources that might become available as combat forces are moved from Iraq."* We welcome recent indications that the U.S. intends on transferring some forces that are being freed in Iraq to Afghanistan in the spring. *NATO countries need to share this burden*, removing national caveats that hinder joint operations against insurgents and threaten the long-term success of the NATO mission in Afghanistan. Additionally, it should be made clear that *when evaluating an increase in the quantity of forces in Afghanistan, all participating countries should match the quality of the forces with the mission they need to perform.*

The U.S. and its NATO partners also need to focus more efforts and resources on training and standing up the Afghan National Army (ANA) and recruiting, training, and providing adequate pay and equipment to the Afghan National Police (ANP) so they can maintain security in an area once coalition forces depart. The U.S. and its NATO partners should reconsider, together with the Afghan government, benchmarks for force levels of both the ANA and ANP that will be realistic to attain and maintain. These benchmarks should focus on quality as well as quantity.

The Study Group welcomes the recent announcement by Defense Secretary Robert Gates that the U.S. government will support (with funding, training and equipment) the expansion of the ANA to 80,000, beyond its current goal of 70,000 by next year. A further expansion of that number may be required – Afghan Defense Minister Abdul Rahim Wardak has called for expanding the ANA to 150,000 – but *any such consideration must take into account affordability, sustainability and the proper balance between police forces and military forces.* In addition, former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Ronald Neumann recently suggested establishing a national conscription service in Afghanistan – an idea that could be examined by the Afghan government and the international community.

The ANP are severely under funded, poorly trained and poorly equipped. Many go months without pay because of corruption and problems with the payroll system. In parts of the country the police are seen as a greater cause of insecurity than the Taliban, undermining the authority and legitimacy of the central government. *The United States needs to play a greater role in building and expanding the ANP* – this would require a G8 mission realignment as this task is presently under Germany’s leadership. The Study Group therefore welcomes U.S. pledges to spend over \$8 billion in 2007–2008 on equipping and training Afghan security forces, the ANA and ANP, as well as increased U.S. involvement in police reform efforts beginning in 2005, which has led to some progress. However, *U.S. assistance needs to go beyond equipping and training, and be directed towards embedding foreign police officers into Afghan units*, possibly by creating a mechanism similar to the NATO-led Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLT) mechanism for the ANA.

The international community also needs to focus on holding Afghan police officers and their superiors accountable for their performance, not just providing more training, pay and new uniforms. *Other international partners – the UN, NATO, and the European Union (EU) – must also commit additional funding and resources to this effort.* Specifically, the EU should be encouraged to enlarge the size and capabilities of its modest Police Mission (EUPOL) in Afghanistan, which the EU launched in June 2007 with the stated aim of monitoring, mentoring, advising and training at the Afghan Ministry of Interior, regional, and provincial levels. This increased effort should be taken in close cooperation with NATO to improve the effectiveness of the comprehensive approach and provide security for the EU personnel.

The international coalition forces need to expand their strategy beyond purely military objectives and focus attention on efforts to engage with the local population and provide security in a way that facilitates economic and development programs and minimizes civilian suffering and casualties. Coalition troops need to develop a better understanding of the culture, politics, and local customs of the areas in which they operate. An increase in Afghan civilian casualties from coalition military operations is angering Afghans. Friction between coalition forces and the civilians they are trying to protect is rising. As the Taliban refine their insurgency techniques and psychological operations aimed at turning the local populace against the coalition forces, U.S. and NATO troops will have to counter the Taliban tactics through increased engagement with the local population.

Several actions are needed to address this problem of current security challenges, which are *critical to the issue of winning, or losing, Afghan “hearts and minds”*:

- First, while “zero civilian casualties” may not be an attainable goal given the nature of the enemy and the battlefield, the U.S. and NATO should, as a matter of policy, continue to publicly reinforce their goal of minimizing civilian casualties, as well as being judicious in the frequent use of air power, erring on the side of caution when civilian casualties are probable.
- Second, *more must be done to involve Afghan forces in U.S. and NATO military planning and operations.* This means closer coordination with the Afghan Ministry of Defense and the ANA. Afghan soldiers should also be included in U.S. and NATO military actions. Surveys show that nearly 90 percent of the Afghan people trust their national army.
- Third, *NATO should set up a special compensation fund for civilian deaths, injuries or property damage resulting from its military operations in Afghanistan, to which all NATO member states should contribute.* This entails a significant opportunity to mitigate the negative effects of what is sometimes unavoidable and unintended damage.

The international community also needs to develop a coordinated strategy in support of President Karzai's national political reconciliation efforts. There is broad agreement that Afghanistan's security problems cannot be addressed by military means alone. Providing incentives to Taliban that do not subscribe to extremist ideologies and agree to put down their guns and join the political process should be considered. The international coalition partners need to adhere to the same standards when negotiating with insurgents, conveying a consistent message that former insurgents will not be allowed to impose an extremist agenda on the Afghan people and will instead participate in the building of a tolerant, pluralistic and representative society.

Finally, the future stability of both Afghanistan and Pakistan depends on the development of an effective strategy to counter and uproot the Taliban/al-Qaeda sanctuary in Pakistan's tribal border areas, particularly in the North and South Waziristan agencies. The Taliban and associated militants operating in Afghanistan conduct most of their recruiting and training on Pakistan's side of the border. These extremists have begun to make inroads into the settled areas of the Northwest Frontier Province in Pakistan, and are increasingly threatening local authority in these regions and spreading an extremist form of Islam through violence and intimidation. *The U.S. and its allies need to develop a regional plan to effectively target the risks coming out of the border region area with Pakistan – this plan should involve the governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan and other regional powers and include better combined intelligence, operations and non-military efforts.*

Any strategy aimed at uprooting the Taliban/al-Qaeda sanctuary must take into account that the local populations in these areas are fiercely independent, adhere to conservative Muslim and entrenched tribal traditions, and hold deep ethnic loyalties and extended family connections. U.S. officials should not over-estimate their ability to influence the local tribes in this region and consider carefully the potential for blowback of providing resources to a group that one day might side with the terrorists. *Rather than trying to insert U.S. influence directly into the region, Washington should strongly encourage systemic political and economic reform that incorporates the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) into the administrative, legal and political systems of Pakistan.* This involves improving overall governance and law and order in the region as well as facilitating economic development. The U.S. is already moving in this direction with a pledge of \$750 million over five years to develop the tribal areas, but difficulties are still underway and it is clear that unless some changes in the Pakistani approach are made, this assistance will not bear fruit.

The recent National Intelligence Estimate entitled “The Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland” (July 2007) concluded that al-Qaeda has regenerated its capability to attack, including a safe haven in the tribal areas of Pakistan. Countering cross border infiltration activity is critical, but it will require closer coordination and cooperation than we have seen to date. The Trilateral Afghanistan-Pakistan-NATO Military Commission is an important mechanism in this regard. So is the strengthening of the U.S. military presence along the Afghan side of the border.

Washington also needs to convince Islamabad to work more closely in joint operations that can bring U.S. resources (including intelligence) and military assets to bear in the border areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan. A large-scale U.S. troop invasion of Pakistan's tribal areas would be disastrous for the Pakistani state and for U.S. interests and would not provide a lasting solution to the problem. A more effective strategy involves working cooperatively with Pakistan to integrate these areas into the Pakistani political system and, once they are secure, provide substantial assistance to build up the economy and social infrastructure.

KEY ISSUE: GOVERNANCE AND RULE OF LAW

Six years after the fall of the Taliban, Afghanistan is still facing a fundamental crisis of governance. Creating a capable and legitimate Afghan government is the sine qua non of the intervention in Afghanistan – without it there is no sustainable security; no sustainable development; without which there is no political legitimacy. Yet the state-building mission in Afghanistan has always taken a back seat in U.S. policy to the counter-terrorism mission in terms of funding, manpower, and political attention. As a result, the fundamental objective of building a competent government that can provide security and justice and gain the trust of the Afghan people has lagged.

A central part of the problem, going back to the initial intervention, is the stunning dearth of human capital in a country ravaged by over 20 years of civil war. The pool of educated Afghan professionals available for staffing its civil administrations remains very small in relation to need. On top of that, many senior political figures – provincial governors, members of the cabinet, and parliamentarians – are considered serial human rights abusers by large segments of the population. This sense of impunity shakes popular confidence in the concepts of democracy and rule of law and makes people question the legitimacy of the government. The out-of-control opium economy has also impacted rule of law and governance in significant ways. Underpaid civil servants are expected to engage in dangerous policing and eradication programs in environments awash in cash for bribes. Senior government officials and militia commanders control trade routes yielding millions of dollars in illicit taxes or funds from engaging directly in the trade. Meanwhile, poppy-eradication programs directed at farmers are deeply unpopular and unevenly enforced, leading to increased resentment against the government in already unstable areas.

This litany of problems in governance and rule of law has made room for challenges to the government's legitimacy and primacy by Taliban and other anti-government, anti-coalition forces. More than building houses, roads, and schools, Afghans fundamentally look to the government to provide security and justice. At present, it is evident that the Afghan government is incapable of doing this, and so Afghans are beginning to hedge their bets in terms of open support for the government. This leads neighbors, aid donors, and troop contributors to hedge as well.

Therefore, *a coherent and resourced strategy to increase the reach, capacity, and legitimacy of the Afghan government must be a top priority.* Efforts thus far to build institutions of state and establish rule of law have been ad hoc, poorly coordinated, and under-funded. The Afghan government and international community have focused on high profile events, such as elections and the effort to draft and ratify a new constitution, but the difficult work of creating a strong system of central and provincial governance that enables and empowers accountable local actors has been lacking. Moreover, virtually every aspect of a functioning justice system is absent.

There have been some important advances, however, with the support of the international community. Many governors and police chiefs with questionable credentials or records of past abuse have been removed. A recent presidential appointments panel was created to vet high-level appointments, although it has yet to begin its work. The heads of the major justice sector institutions – the Supreme Court, the Ministry of Justice, and the Office of the Attorney General – have all been replaced with competent, moderate reformers. Significant additional attention and funds are now devoted to the creation of the Afghan National Police (ANP), although this critical effort is still years away from completion. Reform of the police and the troubled Ministry of Interior remains very nascent. The establishment of a new department of sub-national governance outside of the Ministry of Interior and headed by a well-regarded official is another positive step. Also on the international

level, donors have established a Provincial Justice Coordination Mechanism under the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) to de-conflict internationally-funded justice sector development projects.

A former top U.S. military commander in Afghanistan, Lt. Gen. Karl Eikenberry, has said that the greatest long-term threat to success in Afghanistan is not the resurgence of the Taliban but “the potential irretrievable loss of legitimacy of the government of Afghanistan.” In this regard, he specifically cited several critical areas – corruption, justice and law enforcement – and said: “We need more urgency to build Afghan government capacity and help connect it with the Afghan people.”

In order to improve governance and the rule of law in Afghanistan, the Study Group makes the following recommendations for the Afghan government and the international community:

- *There is a need to enhance the partnership between the international community and the government of Afghanistan.* Mutual responsibilities and obligations need to be made explicit. More ownership on the part of the government of Afghanistan of the very severe problems of corruption must occur, even while the international community offers more coherent advice and robust programs to help the Karzai Administration build governance capacity.
- *The Afghan government and the international community must refocus their efforts to resurrect an integrated and effective justice system for Afghanistan.* In practical terms, this means that actors should *increase and sustain funding to the sector and work towards an Afghan-led prioritization process that will set a realistic agenda for progress in the justice sector.* This will also mean addressing difficult issues such as the role of Islamic law in the courts and the use of informal justice or dispute settlement institutions.
- *A critical goal of efforts to improve the delivery of justice in Afghanistan is to work holistically to establish “pockets of competence” – justice institutions in key provincial and district centers that function properly and are resourced with proven staff, buildings and communications resources – throughout the country.* Once functioning, these pockets would establish their legitimacy and can assist neighboring districts using their experience and practices to reform and improve. In order to do this, *Afghanistan and its partners should:*
 - *Focus on development of human resources in the sector.* This would entail a crash program to create legal professionals and civil servants who can manage the basic infrastructure of a judicial system, as well as a vetting, pay and grade reform processes that will weed out problem employees, promote capable ones, and pay them a living wage.
 - *Focus on institutional development of the Supreme Court, the Office of the Attorney General, the Ministry of Justice, and ANP (currently within the Ministry of Interior) at the national and provincial levels.*
- In addition, to enhance public confidence in government, security forces, and judicial institutions, *the newly created Advisory Panel on Presidential Appointments should be fully implemented and provided both the resources and political support for it to undertake its efforts.* Further, anti-corruption units should be created or strengthened to provide much needed investigative capacity to deal with low- to medium-level cases and prosecutorial capacity for higher-level ones, and the

establishment of a special national court to prosecute special high-level corruption charges should be considered.

- Donors and the Afghan government should *consider establishing an education system* (such as a School of Governance) *for government officials, starting with the level of district chiefs*. Such a system would provide a short training program that would vet officials, develop their basic administrative skills, teach ethics, and build their social networking and sense of nationhood.
- Finally, *constant and sustained attention and efforts must be made to ensure effective access to justice and protection of basic rights in accordance with the basic principles of Afghan law*. For that purpose, *the Afghan government should be encouraged to: adopt a policy that would acknowledge the important role played by non-state (traditional) dispute resolution mechanisms in Afghan society; create a positive relationship with these processes, in accordance with the basic principles of Afghan law; and work to prevent abuses within the traditional sphere*.

KEY ISSUE: COUNTER-NARCOTICS

Last August the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) released its 2007 Afghan Opium Survey. The report contained several important findings: the area in Afghanistan under opium cultivation rose to 193,000 hectares from 165,000 in 2006; the amount of Afghan land used for growing opium is now larger than the combined total under coca cultivation in Latin America. In the center and north of Afghanistan, where the government has increased its authority and presence, and where governors were able to exert authority and rally local support, opium cultivation is diminishing; the number of provinces with no reported poppy cultivation more than doubled from six to thirteen. However, the opposite trend was seen in southern Afghanistan. Some 80 percent of opium poppies were grown in a handful of provinces along the border with Pakistan, where instability is greatest. In the volatile province of Helmand, where the Taliban insurgency is concentrated, poppy cultivation rose 48 percent.

The report repeated the misconception contained in the recently released U.S. Counternarcotics Strategy for Afghanistan that provinces with little or no poppy cultivation are “opium-free.” Elites in “opium-free” provinces continue to profit handsomely from drug trafficking. But the UNODC report is a welcome complement to the U.S. Strategy in that it speaks frankly of the inadequacy of alternative livelihood programs and of development for those who do not grow poppy. The report accurately links poppy cultivation (though not drug trafficking) to insecurity. Like the U.S. Strategy, it calls for the full integration of counter-insurgency and counter-narcotics measures, especially in Helmand province, which has become “the world’s biggest source of illicit drugs, surpassing the output of entire countries.”

The U.S. Strategy correctly states that the drug problem in Afghanistan is “drug money,” which weakens key institutions and significantly strengthens the Taliban. According to UNODC estimates, cultivators receive only about 20 percent of the revenue from narcotics, and the drug money that really harms Afghanistan is the money that passes between trafficker/processors on the one side, and power holders on the other, including Taliban, Afghan government officials, and local/tribal leaders.

The core tools of counter-narcotics policy are crop eradication, interdiction (including arresting and prosecuting traffickers, destruction of labs, etc.), and development (alternative livelihoods). These go side by side with public information and with increased governance and reform of the justice sector. *All are necessary in a coordinated counter-narcotics policy, but they need not be simultaneous. They have to be sequenced to achieve the right outcome.* One example, as limited as its applicability may be, is Thailand, where the government invested in development for ten years before introducing eradication. Since the people had confidence in the alternatives by then, they accepted eradication of what little cultivation was left.

An effective and sustainable counter-narcotics strategy for Afghanistan has to include increasing the access to regional and global markets for products made in Afghanistan. *Within Afghanistan, investment in development – especially infrastructure and industry development – should increase in all provinces as part of the implementation of Afghanistan’s provincial development plans. These programs must go first of all to provinces that are not planting poppy or that are reducing production.* Otherwise there will be perverse incentives.

Simultaneously there must be a greatly enhanced interdiction effort, going beyond seizing containers from traffickers. It must start at the top, with the removal of high officials benefiting from the trade.

The U.S. and other states and international organizations operating in Afghanistan should also strive to ensure that none of their contractors are involved with or benefit from drug trafficking.

The concept of integrating counter-narcotics and counter-insurgency by using international military forces to assist in interdiction is welcome and overdue. But the international forces must take extreme care during such actions not to cause civilian casualties, which have already become a serious issue in the country. These operations should be conducted in full coordination with the Afghan government, with the international forces providing assistance to the Afghan police and/or army with means and intelligence.

How best to pursue poppy eradication and the relationship of eradication to counter-insurgency presents the greatest challenge – and controversy – for the U.S., the international community, and the Afghan government. Proposals to enhance eradication immediately (including the use of herbicides whether sprayed from the air or the ground), especially in Helmand, could prove extremely dangerous for Afghanistan, further undermining support for the government of President Hamid Karzai, alienating thousands of Afghan farmers and providing new recruits for the Taliban.

As an alternative, a more Afghan-centric counter-narcotics strategy should be pursued that includes:

- *A public information campaign stating that the purpose of counter-narcotics is not to destroy but to enhance the livelihoods of the people of Afghanistan.* Afghans cannot build a stable future on the basis of a criminal enterprise that is against Islam. But they also cannot build a stable future on insecurity and poverty. Therefore, the focus should be to work together with the 98 percent of Afghan poppy cultivators (according to the UNODC report) who say that they are willing to abandon poppy cultivation if they can count on earning at least half as much from legal economic activities (not only crops). Eradication should be pursued against cultivators that given alternative means refuse to do so.
- *Ask for voluntary restraint in planting while actually delivering* (not just announcing or funding or launching) *much larger alternative livelihood programs.* Subsidies, price supports, micro-loans, and other forms of insurance to farmers will be needed as they make the transition to licit economic activities.
- *Alternative livelihood programs must provide all the services currently provided to farmers by drug traffickers: futures contracts, guaranteed marketing, financing, and technical assistance (extension services).* Micro-finance must be made easily available so that poor farmers and regions can avail themselves of new opportunities. Such programs have started being implemented in the last couple of years, but they need to be significantly enhanced in order to yield returns and gain the confidence of the Afghans.

The state in Afghanistan can be built only by using the limited force available in a highly-focused and economical way against hard-core opponents, while greatly expanding the incentives (where international actors should have a decisive advantage) to win people over to the side of the government and its international supporters. Counter-narcotics done properly will remove criminal power holders and bring security and development. Done the wrong way, counter-narcotics could destroy any hope of popular support.

KEY ISSUE: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND RECONSTRUCTION

Afghanistan remains one of the poorest countries in the world. With a per capita gross domestic product of only 377 USD in 2007, most Afghans live on less than a dollar a day, the World Bank measure of absolute poverty. Afghanistan was ranked the second lowest country in the world on the UNDP 2007-08 human development index, and is in the bottom five countries of the world for life expectancy (42.9 years), under-five infant mortality (257 per 1,000 live births), maternal mortality, and adult literacy (28%). Access to clean water and health services is extremely limited. In short, most Afghans remain desperately poor.

However, like most societies that have emerged from conflict, Afghanistan has experienced a period of rapid economic growth, averaging 8.7 percent per year since the Taliban was toppled in 2001. Per capita GDP has doubled since 2002. Economic growth has been most rapid in Kabul and other urban centers, although every part of Afghanistan has experienced higher output and incomes, with the exception of some of the most violent regions.

Other economic indicators are also positive. Inflation is in single digits. The national currency, the Afghani, has been stable against the dollar. Reserves at the central bank are now more than \$5 billion, enough to cover 5 months of imports. Agricultural output has been rising as refugees have returned, numerous roads have been built or repaired enabling farmers to transport crops, and urban demand for food has risen. Afghanistan has also been enjoying a construction boom triggered by rising trade (including narcotics), massive refugee return, and foreign assistance. Transport, retail and wholesale trade, and modest manufacturing gains are all contributing to growth as Afghanistan integrates into the regional economy.

Although economic performance in some sectors has been positive, there are several negative trends. The government and its partners have failed in many respects to create a positive business and investment climate. The production and trade of opium is equivalent to more than a third of the licit GDP, fueling rampant corruption and diverting labor. Although opium's importance to the economy is likely to decline as other sectors grow more rapidly, opium production reached an all-time high in 2007 and there is evidence that more of the value-adding refinement of opium to heroin is taking place inside Afghanistan.

Security has gotten worse in numerous areas of the country, disrupting trade and construction of transportation, communications, and energy infrastructure. Although the customs service has improved, agencies other than the customs service obstruct cross-border and internal traffic in a quest for bribes, increasing costs for businesses and consumers. Despite its promises, the government has also failed to implement a payroll system that will ensure the timely payment of wages to certified government employees. In addition, core areas of government remain corrupt, and Afghanistan has actually experienced a significant drop in its global transparency ranking since 2005 (ranked 9th most corrupt country in the world on the 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index).

The U.S. and other donors should strongly support the International Monetary Fund's efforts to work with the Afghan government to reduce opportunities for bribery by introducing an efficient payroll system and making contracting procedure more transparent. The donor community should also support the IMF by insisting that loss-making state-owned enterprises be properly restructured and that the Afghan government cease giving preferences to politically-powerful businesses, state-owned or private.

FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

Amounts of foreign assistance are extremely difficult to tabulate. Donors often provide data in terms of commitments rather than disbursements. Technical assistance payments often go directly to non-government organizations or experts who live outside of Afghanistan. This said, according to the World Bank, Afghanistan now receives about \$3 billion annually in foreign assistance, up from \$1.3 billion in 2002.

Donors have focused on funding education, primary health care, counter-narcotics, and the reconstruction of Afghanistan's major roads and water systems. Training and equipping the Afghan army has received a substantial amount of attention and funding; the police, less so, and assistance to create a justice system, including setting up courts, prosecutors' offices, and prisons even less attention.

Assistance to Afghanistan has shifted from humanitarian relief to funding for projects to improve the operations of the Afghan government and foster economic development, as the need for relief has fallen. Since the fall of the Taliban, rates of enrollment in primary schools have skyrocketed, especially among girls. Donors have funded a massive expansion in primary health care.

Donors should work with the Afghan government to set and fund pay scales that will attract better qualified Afghans, including expatriates, to government jobs. The capacity of the Afghan government to develop and implement plans has constrained the effectiveness and disbursement of assistance. The Afghan government has been unable to tap well-qualified individuals as effectively as it should because of the low level of government salaries. Ensuring competitive wage scales for all government employees from the most senior to teachers and policemen should make the government more efficient and easier for government leaders to hold government employees accountable through the threat of dismissal. Also, *donors should enhance and accelerate infrastructure development – especially outlays on roads, power and water systems – that are necessary to improve security, governance and the Afghan economy.* These efforts should utilize the Afghan labor force, as well as Afghan contractors, as much as possible. Another area of assistance that needs to be significantly bolstered is agricultural expertise.

Donors should focus on giving the Afghan government credit for projects and programs. To do so, donors need to focus on improving Afghan government accounting. *The donor community should also encourage the Afghan government to appoint an Afghan development “czar”, drawing authority from President Karzai and able to coordinate the various government ministries.*

Donors should also spread development assistance more evenly around the country. Most assistance has been funneled into conflict areas, even though it is often much less effective in these areas than others. *The donor community should ensure that relatively peaceful areas benefit from assistance, as well as those with high levels of poppy production or of violence, so that incentives for communities are properly aligned.* If communities received more assistance if they are peaceful, the likelihood that the areas of unrest will spread is likely to fall.

Finally, there is growing concern that uncoordinated military and aid strategies among the various international players in Afghanistan are undermining the overall effort to stabilize Afghanistan. *It is imperative that once coalition forces sweep the Taliban from an area, reconstruction aid and development assistance flow into that region immediately, and proper aid mechanisms should be used for that purpose. Representatives of the local governments must be directly involved in administering the aid to build support and trust between the Afghan people and the local authorities.*

This requires close coordination between international military and civilian operations as well as coordinated strategies that emphasize – not undermine – the authority of the local governments. As mentioned above, one of the highest priorities for the new International Coordinator recommended by the Study Group should be to ensure that all international assistance programs have a coordinated strategy that aims to bolster the central government’s authority throughout the country.

KEY ISSUE: AFGHANISTAN AND ITS NEIGHBORS

To reach the international goal of a stable and peaceful Afghanistan, Kabul needs to have better and more reliable relations with its neighbors and the major states of Asia (Russia, India, and China). Achieving this calls for a much more comprehensive and sustained diplomatic effort to engage all the regional players.

History has shown that landlocked Afghanistan is vulnerable to external pressures and interference, especially from Pakistan. Geography and the presence of large numbers of Pushtuns in both countries give Pakistan great leverage over its weaker neighbor. Interference by other countries, particularly Iran, can pose difficulties but of lesser magnitude than Pakistan.

Reducing antagonisms between Pakistan and Afghanistan must be a top priority for the U.S. and the international community. The task requires a sustained, long-term and coordinated diplomatic effort. *Afghanistan has legitimate concerns and fears, especially about the resurgent Taliban's use of Pakistani territory as a safe haven. Kabul blames Islamabad for this and believes that Pakistan's goal is to regain the influence over Afghanistan that it lost with the defeat of the Taliban in 2001-2002. For its part, Pakistan has legitimate concerns about Afghanistan's unwillingness to accept the Durand Line as the border and related, if latent, Afghan irredentist claims on Pushtun areas of Pakistan. Kabul needs to be encouraged to accept the Durand Line as the international border. Given nationalist sentiments, this will be a hard pill for any Afghan government to swallow. Yet removing uncertainty about the frontier is a prerequisite for smoother relations with Pakistan.*

In addition, Islamabad needs to undertake major steps – not easy in the present tense situation but essential over the long term:

- Despite Pakistan's counterinsurgency efforts over the last four years, the Taliban and al-Qaeda have developed a strong-hold in this region that bolsters the Taliban's capabilities against coalition forces in Afghanistan and facilitates al-Qaeda planning and execution of global terrorist plots. *The U.S. and its international partners will need to work with Pakistan to make every effort to root out Taliban ideology from its own society and close down the extremist madrassahs (religious schools) and training camps that perpetuate the Taliban insurgency and cross border activities.* The Trilateral Afghanistan-Pakistan-NATO Military Commission will be an important mechanism in this latter regard.
- Pakistan has to develop fully effective means for asserting its authority and physical control over the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), including reforming archaic administrative arrangements, and fully integrating these areas politically and economically within Pakistan. FATA reform and resolution of the border issue referred to above have to go together. The United States has authorized expenditures on economic development in the tribal areas, but this requires a far more intensive and better-coordinated international and Pakistani effort.
- *Pakistan needs to remove burdensome restrictions that inhibit the transportation of goods through Pakistan to and from Afghanistan, including from India.* With regard to trade, there should be a more concerted and energetic international effort to enable Afghanistan to take fuller advantage of its geographic position as a crossroads between central, southern and western Asia.

The Study Group therefore welcomes the efforts by the U.S. and other European partners to encourage better ties between Kabul and Islamabad, including the recent convening of “peace jirgas” and the development of people-to-people, trade and economic links. Washington and other influential capitals should bolster such efforts as a way to build trust and confidence between the two countries and gradually change each side’s security perceptions of the region. The recent political complications in Pakistan and the increased security challenges within the country reinforce the notion that without serious steps to tackle the insurgency and extremists in the tribal areas Pakistan’s security may also be at risk.

In addition to promoting and assisting these steps with Pakistan, the U.S. should develop a strategy toward Iran that includes the possibility to resume discussions with Iran to coax greater cooperation from Tehran in helping to stabilize Afghanistan, beginning with the issue of counter-narcotics, where common ground already exists between Iran and the international community. There were productive contacts and exchanges between the U.S. and Iran during the Taliban years (in the so-called “6 Plus 2” UN process) and at the Bonn conference after the Taliban were removed from power. In the last year, however, Iran’s role in Afghanistan has become increasingly troublesome, apparently including supplying arms (including artillery shells, land mines and rocket-propelled grenade launchers) and other support to the Taliban. Although Iran has a history of ideological hostility toward the Taliban, it is likely resorting to assisting its former enemies as a way to pressure the U.S.

Washington, with its allies, should develop a comprehensive picture of what Iran is doing in Afghanistan and map out a sound strategy that seeks to convince Tehran to develop a more constructive role there, including the possibility to reestablish direct talks on Afghanistan. The present U.S. stance of not speaking with Tehran about Afghanistan risks increasing the likelihood that Iran will step up its covert interference as a way of hurting the United States. Even if direct negotiations are judged to be premature, the International Coordinator and NATO should be encouraged to engage all of Afghanistan’s neighbors in developing solutions for Afghanistan’s challenges.

On a regional level, the Afghan government and the international community should initiate a regional process to engage Afghanistan’s neighbors and potential regional partners in future sustainable development of Afghanistan. This process can begin with relatively minor confidence building measures and the establishment of a regional forum for discussion of common challenges. Over the longer term, as Afghanistan makes progress toward standing on its own feet, a multilateral accord involving Afghanistan, all its neighbors, relevant major powers, and the UN would enhance its stability and bolster its international position. Such an accord would recognize Afghanistan as a permanently neutral state, provide international recognition for Afghanistan’s borders, pledge non-interference in internal Afghan affairs, ban the clandestine supply of arms to nongovernmental actors, and establish a comprehensive regime to promote the flow of trade through Afghanistan.

The model (far fetched as it may seem at first glance) would be the Congress of Vienna accord that guaranteed the permanent neutrality of Switzerland. Such an agreement would not stop all interference by neighbors, but would help. It would also provide an international framework for Kabul’s acceptance of its frontier with Pakistan and a basis for the withdrawal of U.S. and NATO military forces from Afghanistan. Indeed, once Afghanistan is able to maintain internal security and defend its borders, the continued presence of foreign troops is likely to stir trouble within the country and with the neighbors.

The fact that none of the external powers – in its immediate neighborhood or beyond - stands to gain from an Afghanistan that again reverts to anarchy provides a shared basis for addressing the problems at hand. Although achieving the above will be a difficult and long-term task, an Afghanistan that gets along with neighbors is essential.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
ASG	Afghanistan Study Group
COIN	Counter Insurgency
CRS	Congressional Research Service
CSP	Center for the Study of the Presidency
EU	European Union
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
G8	Group of Eight (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force (NATO)
ISG	Iraq Study Group
JSF	Allied Joint Force Command (NATO)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OMLT	Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Teams
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander, Europe
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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